

VZCZCXRO7450
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #0524/01 0751115
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161115Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8910
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW PRIORITY 0178
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ PRIORITY 0176
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 6378
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000524

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: DEMOCRACY PARTNERS CONCERNED ELECTION CRISIS
LOOMING

REF: ABUJA 462

ABUJA 00000524 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Heather Merritt for reason 1.
4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: With less than one month to go before elections the Nigeria-based U.S. election partners, NDI, IRI, PACT, and IFES, are strongly concerned that an election crisis is looming. The Nigerian Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has yet to begin basic election preparation including printing ballots and other election forms, procurement of ballot boxes, recruitment and training of 500,000 election staff, as well as designating an additional 30,000 polling places. Our partners pointed out that this "shocking state of affairs," is compounded by political uncertainties. It is far from clear who will ultimately be candidates in next month's elections, and there is the possibility that the election process will be tied up in numerous court cases. With elections one month away it is also unclear how expeditiously the courts will handle the various cases, and whether this will impact the electoral calendar. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) DCM, Poloffs and USAID officials met with representatives NDI, IRI, PACT, and IFES on March 15 to review Nigeria's progress in preparing for the upcoming polls. Though all four organizations continue to plan for and work toward elections in April, they expressed growing concern about the lack of technical preparation and the political climate of uncertainty hanging over the April polls.

TECHNICAL PREPARATIONS

13. (C) The IFES representative believes that the election process is likely to become a "giant court case," which could affect the printing of the ballot. "If the courts step in, there is no chance that we will have an election on time," he said. Logistical preparations are woefully behind schedule with no apparent remedy in sight. Many key tasks have not even started, according to the IFES director. He pointed to the time-consuming work of printing ballots and other election-related forms as well as the subsequent distribution of materials to the 150,000 polling places as formidable tasks.

14. (C) The IFES director also cited the lack of progress in hiring and training one-half million ad-hoc election staff; ballot box procurement; and accreditation for international observers, domestic observers and party polling agents as major shortcomings unheard of a month before credible elections. The result, he said, was "a shocking state of affairs." He held out the possibility that INEC could make progress at the very last minute, but was concerned that when he expressed his concerns to INEC officials, they provided superficial assurances that all was well and things would get done. The IFES director concluded by saying he found the current environment "very disturbing."

THE POLITICAL PARTY VIEW

15. (C) The IRI director strongly believes the elections will happen. He noted, however, a worrying rise in the level of inter-party violence which had affected a dozen states. He suggested that the violence, although clearly misguided, did indicate that parties were taking the elections seriously.

16. (C) The IRI director said a number serious issues still clouded the political horizon. He listed the most significant as uncertainty about Atiku's candidacy, and the waning credibility of INEC. Incidents like INEC's exclusion of the APGA party in Anambra state (which made the election of the INEC Chairman's close friend, gubernatorial candidate Andy Uba, more likely) are part of a worrying trend, he said.

17. (C) Political parties were still uncertain about the accreditation of their party poll watchers. IRI was conducting its poll agent training with the information it has, but many important questions regarding polling and access to the polls have yet to be answered by INEC. He said uncertainty was also affecting IRI's efforts to accredit their international observers, and that INEC had been given

ABUJA 00000524 002.2 OF 002

three copies of the same letter with the details requested. The confusion was compounded by the lack of clarity in the exact roles of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and INEC in accreditation.

VIEW FROM THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NASS) AND CIVIL SOCIETY

18. (C) The NDI representative said that although the overall political picture is bleak, the oversight role of the NASS had been a silver lining. He pointed to NASS-led efforts to hold INEC accountable, examine allegations of corruption by Nigeria's top two office holders and concerted efforts to keep the elections on schedule as positive signs. He suggested that divisions which characterized the third term debate were still in play and that "cash and carry" politics could eventually affect the positive trend, "but the battle lines are drawn," he said.

19. (C) NDI is moving forward with its plans to facilitate the Nigerian presidential debates scheduled for April 1-4. Two representative of the US Presidential Debates Commission will arrive on March 16 and will begin consulting with their Nigerian counterparts about the organizational details.

110. (C) NDI will be fielding two groups of observers, a set of long-term observers who just arrived and will remain until after the elections, and a high profile delegation, led by Madeline Albright, which will observe the presidential elections. The NDI director said that the composition of the delegation and its plans will be included in a press statement which will be released shortly.

111. (C) Civil society, the PACT director said, was still concerned that INEC planned to scuttle the elections. There was also suspicion that in the event of an election, INEC planned to exclude many domestic NGOs in favor of hand-picked groups of INEC-friendly observers. One proposal coming from INEC was for it to mandate that all observer groups include

its designated NGO representatives. This suggestion, along with the lack of clarity about accreditation of domestic observers only fueled what is already a substantial levels of suspicion about INEC's intentions.

CAMPBELL